

Latest arrangements for Labour Department public services

To align with the announcement earlier by the Government to resume public services in a safe and orderly manner, the Labour Department (LD) today (August 28) said that all service counters under the LD will maintain the arrangements announced on August 21 to be open on Monday, Wednesday and Friday until further notice.

The Kwun Tong Occupational Health Clinic will remain open for the whole day on Monday, Wednesday and Friday, as well as in the morning on Saturday. The Fanling Occupational Health Clinic will be open for the whole day on Tuesday and Thursday, and in the morning on Saturday.

In view of public health considerations, members of the public entering the LD's offices and clinics have to undergo on-the-spot temperature checks and should wear masks at all times. Crowd control arrangements will also be implemented.

To reduce the flow of people and social contact, the LD will continue to implement targeted measures while resuming more public services, including adopting a roster system and introducing flexible working hours. The LD appeals for the understanding of members of the public as the waiting time for public services may be lengthened, or a longer time may be needed for the processing of enquiries and applications.

The LD encourages members of the public to make use of the department's online services and information (www.labour.gov.hk) as far as possible. For enquiries, please call the LD's 24-hour enquiry hotline at 2717 1771 (the hotline is provided by 1823), or email the department at enquiry@labour.gov.hk.

Job seekers can use the Interactive Employment Service Website (www.jobs.gov.hk) for job search purposes. The LD's Telephone Employment Service Centre, all Job Centres and industry-based Recruitment Centres also provide enquiry and employment services by telephone (telephone numbers are shown at www.jobs.gov.hk/1/0/WebForm/information/en/our_service/info_jobcentres.aspx) during office hours from Monday to Friday (9am to 1pm and 2pm to 5.30pm).

Applicants for issue of licence or renewal of licence of employment agency may submit their applications to the office of the Employment Agencies Administration by post (Unit 906, 9/F, One Mong Kok Road Commercial Centre, 1 Mong Kok Road, Kowloon) or email (ea-ee@labour.gov.hk).

For information about employment rights and benefits, members of the public may browse the LD's website at www.labour.gov.hk/eng/faq/content.htm.

The LD will review the situation in due course and make further announcements as appropriate.

Latest arrangements for services of HAD

â€‹In view of the latest developments of the COVID-19 epidemic, the Home Affairs Department (HAD) announced today (August 28) its service arrangements from Monday (August 31). The details are set out below.

The Home Affairs Enquiry Centres (HAECs) in 18 districts will open three days a week to provide services for the public, including declaration and oath services for private use, arrangement of appointments for the free legal advice service and distribution of government forms. Opening hours are from 9am to 7pm (except for the HAECs at Cheung Chau and Mui Wo). For the opening schedule of the HAECs, please browse the following:
www.had.gov.hk/file_manager/docs/opening_schedule_of_HAEC_en.pdf.

Counter services of the Estate Beneficiaries Support Unit (EBSU) will be provided on Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays from 8.45am to 1pm and from 2pm to 6pm. Appointments for the services have to be made beforehand on a first-come, first-served basis. For making appointments, please contact the EBSU hotline 2835 1535 from 8.45am to 1pm and from 2pm to 6pm, Monday to Friday (except public holidays). Walk-in requests will not be entertained.

The services provided by the Office of the Licensing Authority will remain normal. All licensing applications in connection with hotels, guesthouses and other premises as well as entertainment are encouraged to be submitted by post or using e-submission. Application forms and submission details can be found on the webpage of the Office of the Licensing Authority:
www.hadla.gov.hk.

All community halls and community centres, except when being used as temporary night heat shelters, will remain closed.

The â€‹HAD's hotlines for persons under home quarantine will operate between 9am and 6pm from Monday to Saturday. For phone numbers of the hotlines, please visit the website of the HAD at
www.had.gov.hk/file_manager/docs/district_hotline_en.pdf. For other enquiries, please call the HAD's enquiry hotline at 2835 2500 between 9am and 7pm from Monday to Friday.

Applications invited for 43rd Personalised Vehicle Registration Marks exercise

The Transport Department (TD) today (August 28) announced that the 43rd invitation exercise of the Personalised Vehicle Registration Marks (PVRMs) Scheme will be launched on September 1.

"Starting from September 1, applications are invited under the 43rd invitation exercise for the allocation of PVRMs upon sale by auction. Completed application forms should reach the department no later than September 30. If there are more than 1 500 applications, those to be considered will be selected by lot," a TD spokesman said.

The application form (TD 569) and the Guidance Notes for Application can be downloaded from the TD's website (www.td.gov.hk) or obtained from the TD's Licensing Offices as well as the Public Enquiry Service Centres of the Home Affairs Department.

Interested persons should complete and submit the application form through one of the following ways:

(a) By post to the Vehicle Registration Marks Unit, Transport Department, 12/F, South Tower, West Kowloon Government Offices, 11 Hoi Ting Road, Yau Ma Tei, Kowloon. Applications received by post will be dated by the postmark;

(b) Via the drop-in boxes at the TD's Licensing Offices at Admiralty, Cheung Sha Wan, Kwun Tong and Sha Tin between 9am and 5pm from Monday to Friday (except public holidays). Applications submitted via the drop-in boxes should be handed in no later than 5pm on September 30 (Wednesday). For easy identification, please mark "PVRM Application" on the envelope of the application. Applicants are advised to visit the TD's website for the latest service arrangements of the Licensing Offices; or

(c) Through the online application service at the GovHK website (www.gov.hk/en/residents/transport/vehicle/ospvrm.htm) if the applicant possesses a digital certificate.

Applicants are advised to read carefully the Guidance Notes for details of the scheme before completing the application form. They can also check whether a proposed PVRM is in compliance with the basic combination requirements by using the online service at the GovHK website.

No payment of a deposit is required when submitting an application. Each applicant can submit only one application in each exercise. If an applicant submits more than one application, none of his or her applications will be processed. Once submitted, the applicant cannot withdraw the application or change the arrangement of the PVRM stated in the application form.

An acknowledgement will immediately be sent to the applicant upon successful submission of an online application. Those who submit applications by TD 569 will receive the TD's acknowledgement by ordinary post within two weeks after submission. Applicants who do not receive the acknowledgement within this time frame should call the TD hotline at 2804 2600.

Chain retailer convicted of supplying and possessing nutritional supplement candy with false trade description

A chain retailer was convicted and fined \$35,000 today (August 28) at Kowloon City Magistrates' Courts for supplying and being in possession of nutritional supplement candy to which a false trade description had been applied for the purpose of trade, in contravention of the Trade Descriptions Ordinance (TDO). A total of 30 cans of candy involved in the case were also confiscated.

Hong Kong Customs earlier received information alleging that a type of nutritional supplement candy with suspected false descriptions of ingredients, which was claimed to contain 20 milligrams of docosahexaenoic acid (DHA) per 100 grams, was being supplied in the market.

Customs officers test-purchased that type of candy from a branch located in San Po Kong of a chain retailer. Test results by the Government Laboratory confirmed that the amount of DHA contained in the candy was only 2.3mg per 100g, falling short of its claim by more than 88 per cent.

After noting the test results, Customs officers took immediate action and seized 30 cans of the type of candy with a total value of \$7,140 from six branches of the chain retailer concerned.

Customs reminds traders to comply with the requirements of the TDO. The department will continue to crack down on the supply of goods with false trade descriptions to protect consumers' interests.

Under the TDO, any person who supplies goods with a false trade description in the course of trade or business, or is in possession of any goods for sale with a false trade description, commits an offence. The maximum penalty upon conviction is a fine of \$500,000 and imprisonment for five years.

Members of the public may report any suspected violation of the TDO to Customs' 24-hour hotline 2545 6182 or its dedicated crime-reporting email account (crimereport@customs.gov.hk).

Hong Kong and Serbia enter into tax pact (with photo)

The Secretary for Financial Services and the Treasury, Mr Christopher Hui, on behalf of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region Government, has signed a comprehensive avoidance of double taxation agreement (CDTA) with Serbia, signifying the Government's sustained efforts in expanding Hong Kong's tax treaty network, a Government spokesman said today (August 28).

This CDTA is the 44th such agreement that Hong Kong has concluded. It sets out the allocation of taxing rights between the two jurisdictions and will help investors better assess their potential tax liabilities from cross-border economic activities.

Mr Hui said, "Serbia is one of the emerging economies participating in the Belt and Road Initiative, which brings about vast business opportunities. The CDTA will promote economic and trade connections between Hong Kong and Serbia, and offer additional incentives for the business sector of both sides to do business or make investments."

Under the Hong Kong-Serbia CDTA, double taxation will be avoided in that any tax paid in Serbia by Hong Kong companies in accordance with the CDTA will be allowed as a credit against the tax payable in Hong Kong on the same income, subject to the provisions of the tax laws of Hong Kong. Likewise, for Serbian companies, the tax paid in Hong Kong will be allowed as a deduction from the tax payable on the same income in Serbia.

Moreover, the Hong Kong-Serbia CDTA also provides the following tax relief arrangements:

- (a) Serbia's withholding tax rates for Hong Kong resident companies on dividends, interest and royalties will be capped at 10 per cent; and
- (b) Profits from international shipping transport earned by Hong Kong residents arising in Serbia will not be taxed in Serbia.

This CDTA will come into force after the completion of ratification procedures by both jurisdictions. In the case of Hong Kong, it will be implemented by way of an order to be made by the Chief Executive in Council under the Inland Revenue Ordinance (Cap. 112). The order is subject to negative vetting by the Legislative Council.

Details of the Hong Kong-Serbia CDTA can be found on the Inland Revenue Department's website (www.ird.gov.hk/eng/pdf/Agreement_Serbia_HongKong.pdf).

Hong Kong will continue to negotiate with trading and investment partners with a view to expanding its CDTA network.

